

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 OES-03 NASA-01 /034 W

----- 071861

R 071653Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2059

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: MILI, TSPA, AG

SUBJ: UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS OVER ALGERIA

REF: ALGIERS 0355; STATE 029080 (NOTAL)

1. SECRETARY GENERAL OF MINISTRY DEFENSE, COL. ABDELHAMID LATRECHE, ASKED ME TO CALL AT MINISTRY MARCH 7. PURPOSE OF CALL WAS TO ASK ME IF WE COULD SHED ANY LIGHT ON STRANGE "MACHINES" WHICH HAD BEEN MANEUVERING OVER ALGERIAN AIRSPACE IN RECENT WEEKS.

2. HE SAID STORY STARTED LAST JANUARY WITH APPEARANCE THREE AMERICAN JOURNALISTS IN BECHAR WHO ANNOUNCED THEY WERE THERE TO COVER ARRIVAL OF BALLOON WHICH TAKING OFF FROM CALIFORNIA. I SAID THIS WAS PRESUMABLY REFERENCE TO JOURNALISTS WHO HAD COME TO COVER MALCOM FORBES' PROPOSED FLIGHT WHICH HAD BEEN ABORTED AT LAST MINUTE.

HE SAID THAT MIGHT BE, BUT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY THERE- AFTER ALGERIANS BEGAN SEEING STRANGE OBJECTS IN SKY. THEY HAD BEEN SEEN NEAR MILITARY INSTALLATIONS BY
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RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE AND ALGERIANS WERE ASKING US FIRST

BECAUSE SIGHTINGS HAD OCCURRED SO SOON AFTER APPEARANCE
AMERICAN JOURNALISTS.

3. HE SAID OBJECT HAD BEEN SEEN FIVE TIMES, USUALLY
ABOUT 1900 OR 1930 AND ON ONE OCCASION IT HAD REMAINED
VISIBLE FOR OVER TWO HOURS. HAD BEEN SEEN TWICE NEAR
ORAN, ONCE IN CENTER OF COUNTRY, ONCE NEAR BECHAR AND,
MOST RECENTLY, OFF THE COAST LAST NIGHT (MARCH 6).
OBJECT HAS VERY BRIGHT LIGHT (HE KEPT COMPARING IT TO
HEADLIGHT OF A CAR) WHICH OBSCURES ITS SHAPE. OBJECT
MANEUVERS AND HAS BEEN SEEN TO LAND AND TAKE OFF. SIGHTING
LAST NIGHT, AT ABOUT 1930, WAS FIRST BY RADAR AND
SECONDLY VISUALLY. OBJECT WAS AT ABOUT 15,000 (SIC)
METERS ALTITUDE. ON OTHER OCCASIONS IT HAS BEEN SIGHTED
AT ESTIMATED ALTITUDE OF 2,000 METERS. LATRECHE
EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS ALWAYS SEEN BY MORE THAN ONE PERSON
AND THAT IT WAS THEREFORE NOT HALLUCINATION. HE DID NOT
SEEM PARTICULARLY WORRIED, BUT DID SEEM TO BE TAKING STORIES
SERIOUSLY.

4. I REMARKED THAT ALGERIANS HAD PREVIOUSLY ASKED US
ABOUT MYSTERIOUS BALLOON AND OUR QUERIES HAD ELICITED
NO INFORMATION. LATRECHE SAID THAT CASE HAD BEEN
CLOSED AND THIS WAS ANOTHER. HE SAID ALGERIANS
FOLLOWING DEPLOYMENT OF SIXTH FLEET BY RADAR AND
AIRCRAFT SURVEILLANCE AND WONDERED WHETHER THESE
NEW SIGHTINGS WERE RESULT OF SIXTH FLEET MANEUVERS OF SOME
SORT. I SAID IT POSSIBLE THAT SOME PHENOMENON SEEN OFF
COAST COULD BE PRODUCED BY FLEET BUT COULD ASSURE HIM
CATEGORICALLY THERE WERE NO AIRCRAFT, MACHINES, BALLOONS
OR ANYTHING ELSE AMERICAN USING ALGERIAN AIRSPACE
WITHOUT EXPLICIT PERMISSION ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES. NEVER-
THELESS, I WOULD IMMEDIATELY SEND MESSAGE TO APPROPRIATE
CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES ASKING IF THEY HAD ANY
RELEVANT INFORMATION.

5. COMMENT: OUR 2447 REPORTED THAT MYSTERIOUS BALLOON
HAD BEEN SIGHTED BY ALGERIANS NEAR ORAN JANUARY 25.
THIS EVIDENTLY FIRST SIGHTING OF OBJECT REFERRED TO
IN TODAY'S CONVERSATION. WE HAVE NO OTHER DATA ON TIMES
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BUT ASSUME ALGERIANS CAN PROVIDE IF WE INTERESTED.
LATRECHE IS NOT EXCITABLE PERSON AND ALGERIAN MILITARY
IN GENERAL PRETTY MATTER-OF-FACT. WE ASSUME THEY HAVE
INDEED SEEN SOMETHING, BUT ASSUME IT NATURAL PHENOMENON
OF SOME SORT WHICH HAS ENGENDERED A MILD HYSTERIA AND
REPORTS OF REPEATED SIGHTINGS. GIVEN LEVEL AT WHICH
QUERY MADE, WE MUST TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, HOWEVER.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: CAN ANY OF ADDRESSEES SHED ANY
LIGHT ON MATTER, AND PARTICULARLY ON ALLEGED RADAR
SIGHTING MARCH 6? WOULD BE USEFUL HAVE SERIOUS REPLY
TO GIVE TO LATRECHE. HE HAS ALREADY REJECTED MY THEORY
THAT OBJECT IS SATELLITE OR THAT IN CASE OF SIGHTING
OFF COAST IT WAS SEARCHLIGHT BOUNCING OFF CLOUDS.PARKER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETING, UNIDENTIFIED OBJECTS DETECTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: johnsorg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ALGIER00638
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: UPGRADED PER MEMO P830041-0155
Executive Order: R1 19880216 BURKE, JOHR R
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P830041-0156, P830007-0589, D750081-0656
From: ALGIERS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750374/aaaacogc.tel
Line Count: 121
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 ALGIERS 355, 75 STATE 29080, 75 ALGIERS 0355, 75 STATE 029080
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: johnsorg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JUL 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <24 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS OVER ALGERIA
TAGS: MILI, TSPA, AG, US
To: STATE RABAT
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006